

October 3, 2006
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Vice Chairman Jeff Marker and members Dan Wakley and Robert Turpin. Also present were the Administrative Services Manager (Tammy Simmons), Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield), and Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde). Vice Chairman Marker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Wakley moved approval of the minutes from the September 5, 2006 meeting; Turpin seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Woodlawn Beach/Oriole Beach/Archie Glover Boat Ramp Updates

Whitfield reviewed the Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp requests presented at last month's meeting. He provided the following information regarding actions taken:

1. Slippery Ramp – Ramp has been milled to rough up the surface. (Also milled Oriole Beach Boat Ramp)
2. Installation of night lighting –Requested a proposal from Gulf Power Company to provide a light at the boat ramp.
3. Additional boat ramp on east side of existing pier –County staff's opinion is permitting will be problematic due to grass bed issues.
4. Debris removal in water near pier – County staff will locate and remove debris during low winter tides.
5. Acquire waterfront property immediately to the west of the ramp for expansion– There is adequate parking for current boat ramp usage and county property is already available for parking expansion when needed; therefore, additional property is not needed.
6. Additional trash receptacle – Parks Department will add additional trash receptacle.

Whitfield said the county has closed on the acquisition of property for expansion of the Oriole Beach Boat Ramp parking area. He said a Public Works crew will clear and prepare the site for limerock base to provide stabilized parking area. Whitfield said the work will begin sometime within the next 4 to 6 weeks. Marker requested Whitfield meet with him to identify the trees that will be removed from the site. Whitfield said there will also be some additional landscaping provided.

Whitfield said the Archie Glover Boat Ramp road repairs are underway. He said the county's supplier of limerock is currently out so the project is on hold until the supplier can get more limerock in stock. Whitfield said the project should be complete by the end of the year.

Wakley said he will notify Barry Koncan regarding the improvements at Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp.

Mae Lane Boat Ramp Improvements

Whitfield said there is a request to install a pier at the Mae Lane Boat Ramp. He said this boat ramp is not used a great deal, but the county does maintain the ramp. Whitfield said parking is limited. He provided the following information regarding needed improvements.

Permitting \$ 500.00
Dock Materials \$2,000.00
Ramp Replacement \$1,500.00
Road Stabilization \$3,200.00
Total \$7,200.00

Turpin asked if there are any safety or liability issues associated with the current condition of the ramp. Whitfield said no. There was discussion regarding whether all or part of the improvements should be completed.

Turpin moved approval to use Boater Improvement Funds to complete all the recommended improvements at Mae Lane Boat Ramp. The motion died due to lack of a second.

There was discussion regarding this boat ramp only being usable for smaller boats and the history of its usage. Marker suggested tabling the request until additional information can be provided on usage of the ramp. Turpin agreed. He said the boat ramp may be used more frequently if improvements are made. Whitfield the most cost effective improvement will be to acquire the necessary permit and build a dock. He said the other improvements can be done as they are needed.

Simmons provided slides of the Mae Lane Boat Ramp, the two adjacent lots that were recently for sale, and the right of way area for parking. Wakley asked if there are any signs posted identifying this county boat ramp. Whitfield said signage will be posted if improvements are made.

Turpin moved approval for Whitfield to move forward with obtaining the permits for improvements to the Mae Lane Boat Ramp; Wakley seconded, and the vote carried unanimously. (3-0)

Turpin said the permitting process is lengthy, and this will allow time for the committee to decide on which improvements should take place. He said he felt the county should maintain all public ramps it currently has.

Florida Sea Grant Waterway Planning Process

Verlinde provided information regarding goals and objectives for a Waterway Management Plan (Attachment in File). She said the next step is to get input from the Marine Advisory Committee on how to reach these objectives. Verlinde asked the committee if they would like the Waterfront Community Group from Florida Sea Grant to design a study based on science. She said the committee members can email their ideas to her, and she will incorporate the responses into the plan for discussion at the next meeting. Verlinde reviewed several additions to the plan.

Marker said he felt a volunteer from Santa Rosa County should attend the Boating and Waterways Management in Florida Conference in Oceanfront, Florida on November 1-3, 2006 (Attachment in File). He said he would like the county to fund the expenses to send a designated person to the conference. Marker said this person can provide a report to the committee. Turpin said the conference will be a great overview of Florida waterway issues. Simmons said she will provide this recommendation to the County Administrator

Waterway Access Funding Alternatives

Marker asked the committee members if they have any funding ideas for acquisition of property that will provide waterway access. Turpin discussed the Coastal Partnership Initiative Grant from NOAA with a funding category for waterway access and two other grant funding sources. He said the challenge is having the property available for a period of time that allows the county to use grant funds to acquire the property. Turpin said usually the property is sold before the application can be processed and funds become available. He discussed the possibility of using a portion of reoccurring funds such as the Tourist Development Fund to provide waterway access for tourists.

Marker suggested using a portion of the Recreational Funds for waterway access. Whitfield said 40% of the franchise fees goes into the Recreation Fund for various projects at the recreation and passive parks. Marker suggested the Board of County Commissioners look at using a portion of the franchise fees, tourist development tax, and any other funding sources within the county to accumulate funds for acquisition of waterway properties. Turpin recommended getting additional information regarding the amount collected in franchise fees to determine what percentage to request. Whitfield said the Budget Director can provide this information. There was further discussion regarding the current real estate market and additional funding sources for waterway access purchases.

Marker requested a report on the current balance in the Boater Improvement Fund. Turpin requested a report on the current Tourist Development budget. He noted Santa Rosa County will not be able to apply for a Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Artificial Reef Grant this year.

Wakley asked Escambia County's status regarding fees for boat ramp usage. Turpin said Escambia County's Marine Advisory Committee has recommended a \$5.00 fee for coastal waterway ramp usage. Wakley said the key to a boat ramp is water access and water depth. He said this committee needs to be creative and proactive with ideas. Wakley suggested acquiring loans to purchase property, adding \$1.00 to the Vessel Registration Fee, and charging a fee for boat ramp usage. He said it will take the Board of County Commissioners assistance to designate the funds to acquire waterfront property. Turpin agreed. He asked Whitfield the locations of the highest demand boat ramps. Whitfield said the busiest boat ramps are Oriole Beach, Woodlawn, East River, and Navarre Beach. He said the committee needs to look at opportunities to add new facilities with deep water access. There was discussion regarding which areas within the county need additional waterway access. Simmons noted there is a county boat ramp inventory on the county's website.

There was discussion regarding fuel usage for boats and the amount of road tax boaters pay. Turpin said state legislators recently increased the amount of funds going into the state's coffers for boat ramps.

Boating Safety/Boating Etiquette Seminar

Marker requested ideas to improve water safety and etiquette. He suggested a spring seminar. Wakley said the Auxiliary Coast Guard provides free vessel inspections. There was discussion regarding ways to encourage boaters to participate in a boater safety event. Verlinde said the county incorporates boater safety into all county events. Turpin suggested a family event to get children involved. There was further discussion regarding incentives to get all boaters involved with boater safety.

Next Meeting/Adjournment

Turpin said the hurricane debris clean up in Escambia County waterways he discussed last month may not occur. He said FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) is requiring Escambia County to contribute 50% of the funding for the debris clean up. Turpin said unfortunately the project will probably not occur.

Turpin requested information regarding the construction of the new Navarre Beach Fishing Pier and Underwater Marine Sanctuary. He asked if FEMA funding is available for the project and what will happen with the existing fishing pier. Whitfield said Blaylock will need to provide a report on the pier status. Turpin said he will be unavailable for the November and December Marine Advisory Committee meetings.

The next scheduled Marine Advisory Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, November 7, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the Marine Advisory Committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.